

# QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

## DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

### PhD REQUIREMENTS AND REGULATIONS

The following statement applies to all candidates entering the PhD program in Geography and Planning. It is consistent with the [General Regulations](#) for Graduate Study, which appear in the [Calendar](#) of the School of Graduate Studies, and should be read in conjunction with those guidelines.

## A THE PhD DEGREE PROGRAM IN GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

### 1 Status and Time Limits

Effective for students admitted September 1, 2013 and all subsequent years:

While the doctoral program is designed and approved to be completed within four years (12 terms) of initial full-time registration there are many reasons why additional time may be required. This regulation describes the [standard timeframe for program completion](#) (scroll and click on Time Limits for Completion of Programs) and the process for [extending the timeframe](#) (scroll and click on Extension of Time Limits).

Effective for students admitted prior to September 1, 2013:  
The requirements for doctoral programs must be completed within seven years from the time of initial registration in the department/program. It should be noted that these specified periods are time LIMITS and are not indicative of normal program duration.

Normally, students are expected to register as full-time and to be on-campus throughout their doctoral programs. Students who are not on campus on a full-time basis must have approval of both the Department and the Graduate School to register as full-time off-campus (see the Graduate School regulations for part-time and off-campus status).

### 2 Annual Status Reports

All candidates shall submit an [annual written report](#) (scroll and click on Annual Report Form) outlining stage of development, courses and examinations completed, a statement on field research, and a list of scholarly outputs. The Graduate Coordinator may on the basis of that report

call a meeting with the candidate, the supervisor(s), and the Head of the Department if deemed necessary.

### **3 Supervisory Committee**

In addition, the thesis supervisory committee should be established and hold its initial meeting in Year One, and a candidate will normally meet at least once a year with her or his committee (see Section 4 below). The supervisor shall submit a brief written report on the annual meeting, to be placed in the candidate's file.

### **4 Requirements**

The doctoral program in geography consists of course work, a qualifying examination, a thesis, and where appropriate, a language requirement.

## **B COURSE WORK**

### **1 Purpose of Course Work**

Course work is intended to help the candidate to become acquainted with significant components of the discipline, and to prepare her or him to undertake original research in the area chosen for a thesis. The opportunity for contact with a number of faculty in the Department and elsewhere in the University is likewise important.

### **2 Course Work Requirement**

Doctoral candidates are required to take GPHY-801\* (Conceptual and Methodological Basis of Geography, which is a mandatory seminar in which a preliminary thesis proposal is developed) and a minimum of two additional graduate term-length courses beyond the Master's degree. One of these courses may be taken outside the Department of Geography, with approval of the Supervisor and Graduate Coordinator. With the exception of GPHY-801\*, a candidate should take no more than one course with her or his supervisor and this should normally not be a directed reading course. After reviewing a candidate's academic preparation and research aspirations, an incoming candidate may be required by his or her supervisor, in consultation with the Associate Head (Graduate Studies), to complete more courses than the minimum specified.

## C LANGUAGE

The Associate Head (Graduate Studies), in consultation with the candidate's supervisor, will require the candidate to gain competence in a language other than English if it is judged to be pertinent to a candidate's program. Normally, a decision on whether the candidate must satisfy a language requirement will be made no later than the beginning of the second term of full-time registration in the PhD program.

## D QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

### 1 Purpose of the Qualifying Examination

The overall purpose of the examination is to evaluate a candidate's suitability for continuing in the doctoral program. It is normally taken after all course work has been completed and before the beginning of substantive fieldwork, and at least one year before the submission of the thesis. In some circumstances, it may be taken before all the courses have been completed. The examination is normally held in the fourth term of a candidate's program (fall term of the second year). Candidates who have not successfully completed the qualifying examination by the end of the sixth term (summer of second year) will be asked to withdraw from the doctoral program subject to appeal to a committee to consist of the head of the department or the head's delegate, the graduate coordinator, and one additional tenured faculty member other than the faculty member(s) supervising the graduate student.

The basis of the evaluation is twofold: first it concerns the major ideas of the research proposal (see below) defining the topic the candidate proposes for a thesis; second, it considers domains of reading that address the broader philosophical, methodological and substantive issues that define the intellectual content and context of the candidate's research activities. Typically a candidate might identify three or four domains of reading for their proposal. It is not assumed that the candidate will have fully developed these elements, but rather that he or she has sufficient background to *continue* his or her development through the completion of a thesis.

The qualifying examination should aid in the identification of weaknesses that need to be remedied, provide the candidate with the opportunity to organize material in a wider context than is normally available in an individual graduate course, and aid the examining committee in forming an overall opinion with respect to suitability of the candidate to continue in the program by beginning research toward the thesis.

## 2 Preparation for the Qualifying Examination

The basis of the Qualifying Examination is an examination of a Research Proposal prepared by the candidate. Preparation for the examination should include the following steps:

- a. The formation of an Examination Committee comprising:
  - a chair (appointed by the head)
  - the head or head's delegate
  - the supervisor
  - at least one internal examiner from the department
  - an internal-external examiner, from within Queen's but outside the department, may be added at the discretion of the supervisor

The Examination Committee therefore normally consists of the Supervisory Committee plus a chair and the head or head's delegate. (See section 4 for the roles and responsibilities of the committee members). The Examination Committee should be formed by the end of the second term in the program. It is desirable that wherever possible the members of the Examination Committee should also serve on the candidate's final thesis committee, but committee membership may be revisited after the Qualifying examination. Only under exceptional circumstances may any examiner be from outside the University. An examiner from outside the University who serves on the committee should under no circumstances serve as the external examiner of the final thesis.

- b. A first meeting of the candidate and the Committee should be convened by the end of the second term, and no later than early in the fourth term of the candidate's program. The purpose of the meeting is: (i) to allow the candidate to get early advice on the direction of his or her research from the committee; and (ii) to help establish the domains of background reading for which she or he is responsible in the area in which the proposal will be presented. In preparation for this meeting, the candidate should circulate to the Committee members a first draft of the Research Proposal, to be considered a working document. The first meeting is not meant to be an examination of this document, but rather a discussion formed around it. Candidates are encouraged to seek the advice of individual members of the committee both before and after this preliminary meeting.

- c. The final Research Proposal should normally be submitted no later than the last day of the fourth term in the program (usually December of the second year). It is in the interest of many candidates to submit a proposal earlier so that it can be used as a basis for submissions for scholarships or other funding with deadlines in the fall term. The Qualifying Exam may be scheduled no earlier than two weeks after the final Research Proposal is submitted to the committee.
- d. As soon as possible after the submission of the Research Proposal, the examining committee will submit written evaluations to the chair of the committee. Unless two or more of the written evaluations indicate the Qualifying Examination should not be held, the candidate will proceed to examination (See section D.3, the Qualifying Examination).
- e. In those cases where two of the written evaluations of the Research Proposal have been negative, a second meeting will be held with the candidate and the Examination Committee prior to the Qualifying Examination. The purpose of the meeting will be: (i) to allow the committee members to consult as a group on the quality of the Research Proposal; (ii) to indicate to the candidate any problems or revisions to the proposal which are necessary before the Qualifying Examination can take place; and (iii) to set a date for the Qualifying Examination.

### **3 The Qualifying Examination**

- a. The examination will be approximately two hours duration and no more than three hours. The examination should focus on both the substance of the proposal and the specified domains of background reading. The decision of the Committee should be based on the quality of the proposal and the candidate's oral performance in the examination. At the conclusion of the examination, the candidate will withdraw while the committee reaches its decision.
- b. The possible outcomes of the examination are as follows:
  - i. **Pass:** allowed to continue.
  - ii. **Pass with revisions:** these include recommended revisions to the proposal and may also include recommendations or requirements with regard to additional reading or coursework. Revised proposals must be submitted to the Committee members who should individually certify to the chair that the agreed revisions have been satisfactorily completed.

- iii. **Fail:** after one failure, the candidate is permitted to re-sit the Qualifying Examination once within six months. A second failure or the passage of six months without re-examination requires withdrawal from the programme. The decision of the Committee is by simple majority. A split decision constitutes a failure. Candidates wishing to appeal the decision of the Committee after a second failure may consult the Graduate School Calendar (Section 8.9(c)) for details of the procedure.
- c. The chair will inform the candidate of the decision of the Committee at the conclusion of the examination.
- d. It should be noted that the Research Proposal, as examined, is an indication of the stage of development of the thinking of the candidate in a given research area. It is not absolutely binding on subsequent work. Clearly, as research progresses, ideas can change and emphases shift. In exceptional circumstances, a major departure from the examined proposal may be permitted. Any such departure must be detailed in a written statement to the head and be approved by the Committee members.

#### **4 Responsibilities of the Qualifying Examination Committee**

The members of the committee shall normally be responsible for:

- a. Participating in a first meeting described under D.2.b above.
- b. Preparing, within two weeks of submission of the Research Proposal, a written report on the Proposal to be submitted to the chair of the committee. The report should comment on the substance of the proposal and indicate whether, in the opinion of the examiner, the candidate can go forward to oral examination. Any recommendations for revisions to the Proposal, additional domains, literature, or extra work to be completed before an examination may be held, *must* be detailed in the written report.
- c. *If necessary*, participating in a second meeting described under D.2.e above. The committee chair (in the absence of the candidate) will first read out the written reports. The committee should then reach agreement on what specific changes or additional work a candidate must undertake before proceeding. These will then be discussed with the candidate and confirmed in a memorandum prepared by the chair and circulated to the candidate and members of the committee. A

resubmitted proposal must normally be orally examined within one month of resubmission.

- d. Attending and participating in the oral qualifying examination in person (see D.3 above). Under exceptional circumstances, an examiner, may be permitted to submit a list of questions that will be posed by the chair on her or his behalf.
- e. In all meetings with the candidate the chair will act as an impartial arbiter and ensure that the candidate is treated fairly at all times. The chair is a non-voting member of the Committee. The chair will also be responsible for preparing a written report summarizing the content of the examination and setting out (in the case of D.3.b.ii or D.3.b.iii above) the detailed recommendations of the Committee. This report will be circulated to the other members of the Committee for comment and then given to the candidate and placed in his or her file in the Department. A copy of the final approved proposal should be placed in the candidate's file.

## **E THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

The following are *guidelines* for the preparation of the Research Proposal. Although it is recognized that each proposal is developed for a unique problem and context, every effort should be made to include the components identified below.

The Research Proposal is a critical document in the progress to the PhD. It will be used to assess whether a candidate is sufficiently prepared to continue with his or her thesis research. The proposal should contain the following sections:

- 1 Introduction:** The introduction presents the general research problem and a rationale for its being worthy of substantial research.
- 2 Literature Review:** This section establishes the intellectual context within which the research is being undertaken. It should identify the key research items, citing both the major theoretical and empirical contributions that identify the starting point of the proposed research and that justify the intellectual decisions regarding the choice of research problem and method. It is *not* a comprehensive literature review, which would normally be an integral part of the research endeavour itself. All references cited in this section should be listed in footnotes, endnotes, or a reference section.

**3 Research Questions:** The specific research question or questions that will form the focus of the research should arise from the general statement and the background literature.

**4 Methodology:** In this section, candidates should explain how they will answer the research questions laid out in the preceding section. It is essential that the linkages between the research questions and the research methods proposed to answer those questions be clearly delineated. This is a critical element of the proposal as it allows the committee to determine whether the proposed research is feasible within a reasonable time frame. Although it is recognized that subsequent experience may require changes in the methodology, it is essential that the candidate make every effort to set out the proposed procedures and their justification in as much detail as is possible.

The section should identify whether the research is using field observation/measurement, laboratory experiment, archival research, text evaluation, in-depth interviewing, large-scale analysis of secondary data, surveys, or some combination of these activities. Within any given strategy, *where appropriate*, the following types of items should be included:

- a. identification and justification of the location of the research;
- b. the number of observations to be made, the duration of data collection, the size of sample or the range of qualitative sources to be consulted; these should be assessed to determine if they are sufficient to address the questions posed;
- c. the specific measures to be used, such as instrument recordings, photography, survey, interview and questionnaire items, archival sources, secondary data sources; these should be identified in sufficient detail that their general appropriateness can be assessed, although clearly final details (such as the full questionnaire layout) will be resolved as the research proceeds.
- d. a discussion of the validity and reliability of the proposed measures. If they are standard measures, provide references; if they are new measures, how will validity and reliability of these measures be assessed? If secondary sources are used, questions of validity and reliability should also be discussed.
- e. what methods of analysis will be used. If hypotheses are to be tested, how will they be tested? If parameters are to be estimated or relationships described, how will this be done? If large amounts of archival, text, audio or visual materials will be collected, what framework will be used to organize and synthesize this material?

**5 Resources:** What resources are needed to accomplish the proposed research? Care should be taken to spell out requirements in the following areas:

- a. travel (fares + accommodation + subsistence);
- b. hiring of field assistants;
- c. equipment (must this be purchased?);
- d. costs of tests or measurements (both in and out of Department);
- e. survey needs: interviewers, travel, telephone, supplies, coding;
- f. costs of secondary data acquisition;
- g. costs associated with archival access, particularly photocopying;
- h. computing costs;

The resources currently available to the candidate from external agencies, from committed allocations from the supervisor and/or from the department or university should be specified.

**6 Timetable:** A timetable of research activities should be spelled out in as much detail as possible. Together with the discussions of methodology and resources, it will help in the assessment of the feasibility of the research.

**7 Domains of Background Reading:** This section of the proposal should delineate the domains of background reading for which the candidate is responsible in the oral examination. Most proposals include three or four domains of reading. This section should contain:

- a. a short (1–2-page) statement identifying the domains, providing a brief rationale for their themes and extent in light of the proposed research
- b. an extended bibliography of the references that constitute the domains. These may be subdivided by theme or between theoretical, substantive, and methodological sources, as appropriate. Care should be taken to ensure that all references are cited in a complete and consistent manner according to the stylistic conventions of any major disciplinary journal.

- 8 Overall Length of the Proposal:** The length of the proposal depends on responding satisfactorily to the above requirements; however, a reasonable expectation is that the body of the text (sections 1 through 4) will be *a maximum of 20 pages*, double-spaced (excluding references or notes and the bibliography related to the domains). Avoid an excessively long literature review, which is not necessary to a coherent argument. It is expected that the proposal meet acceptable standards of production. It should be typed, double-spaced on 8.5" x 11.0" paper. There is no limit to the formal length of the bibliography related to the domains (section 7) although it is in the interest of the candidate to include only literature that has a direct bearing on or connection to the proposed research activity. Past experience suggests that a bibliography of between 50–100 books and/or articles would be more than sufficient to define the domains.

## F THE PhD THESIS IN GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

PhD students in the Geography and Planning Department have the option of writing a traditional thesis or a manuscript thesis.

- 1 Scope:** The PhD thesis is the major requirement of the program. It must comprise a coherent and unified research project in the case of a traditional thesis or a series of logically related research papers in the case of a manuscript thesis. It must be well written and display a scholarly understanding of the subject. And it must include a (or several) review(s) of previous work related to the original research conducted and a concluding summation of the thesis' contribution to the subject.
- 2 Length:** While there is no set length to a Ph.D. thesis in geography, past practice would suggest that most theses range between 150 and 300 pages of text; with traditional theses often approaching the upward boundary and manuscript theses more likely to be near the lower boundary. Manuscript theses also require that there be a minimum of three manuscripts in addition to the introduction, literature review (optional at discretion of supervisor in consultation with the student) and conclusions.
- 3 Original Research:** A thesis must involve the collection, analysis and interpretation of primary material from field, laboratory, theoretical, or archival research. The expectation is that the thesis makes an original contribution to geographic knowledge.
- 4 Form:** Please see "[General Form of Theses](#)" available at the School of Graduate Studies.

The following are other requirements for the manuscript thesis option:

**Expectations:** The intellectual effort behind the manuscripts must be dominated by the student. Students will normally hold first authorship on the manuscripts that constitute the thesis. When there is multiple authorship, the thesis must include an authorship statement outlining the role of all authors and specifying the contributions of the thesis author. When work from a previously published or in-press manuscript is included in the thesis, a waiver from the copyright holders is normally required and should be included in an appendix.

**Publication:** The manuscripts may be ready for submission, submitted, in press, or published. Manuscripts will typically be peer-reviewed journal articles, but other formats, such as book chapters, may be appropriate as negotiated with the supervisor and committee.

**References:** There are two options for presenting references. 1) References can be consolidated at the end of the thesis or 2) References can be included at the end of each chapter. Formatting must be consistent with the School of Graduate Studies guidelines.